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SPECIAL
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ESTIMATE

Soviet Strategic Arms Programs and Detente:
What Are They Up To?

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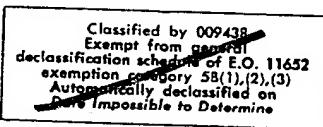
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SNIE 11-4-73

**SOVIET STRATEGIC ARMS PROGRAMS
AND DETENTE: WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?**

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SOVIET STRATEGIC ARMS PROGRAMS AND DETENTE: WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?

NOTE

On 9 July 1973, Soviet authorities signed to press an editorial in the CPSU journal *KOMMUNIST* that may well rank as the most optimistic assessment of the prospects for US-Soviet relations printed in the USSR in the last decade. The editorial reiterates that peaceful coexistence does not mean "a weakening of the class struggle in the international arena" but actually promotes such Soviet interests as the "national liberation movement" and the fight against "bourgeois ideology." It struck a new note, however, in asserting that US-Soviet relations have passed a historic and fundamental turning point for the better, that "considerable obstacles" already exist to prevent a reversion to Cold War relations, and that political detente involves military detente in "organic" combination.

On the same day, the Soviets conducted [] flight test of a true MIRV system on board the SS-X-17 ICBM. []

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to understand the intentions and motivations behind Soviet policy evidenced by recent events: on the one hand, the foreign policy apparently aimed at a far-reaching detente with the US and its allies; and, on the other hand, the vigorous pursuit of weapons development programs that portend substantial improvements in Soviet strategic capability.

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PRÉCIS

In the months since the strategic arms accords were signed in May 1972, the Soviet government has increasingly stressed its commitment to a policy of detente with the US and the West. Certainly a number of Soviet political interests ride on this policy, Brezhnev's own prestige is heavily tied to it, and its collapse would be very unsettling to Soviet leaders. At the same time, the Soviets have been conducting a vigorous and wide-ranging program of strategic weapons development clearly aimed at a major modernization of their strategic forces.

This Estimate assesses the relationship between these two strains of Soviet policy. Its principal judgments are:

- Current Soviet development programs for ICBM force modernization were well underway in May 1972 and do not appear to have been altered by the Interim Agreement. The Soviets do not feel they are constrained from proceeding with extensive modernization of their deployed ICBM force.
- However, the Soviets have undertaken activities that raise serious questions for the US about the verifiability of the Interim Agreement and about Soviet willingness to respect US unilateral declarations. These activities include: possible development of the SS-X-16 as a mobile ICBM; continuation of concealment practices for this development; and construction of new large silos, beyond the numerical limit established by the Interim Agreement, which are probably intended as launch control facilities yet whose purpose cannot now be verified. The activities in question, although they certainly originated in normal Soviet planning, imply *de facto* tests of US resolve on the rules of SALT compliance. Whether these tests are intentional and how determined they prove to be must await evidence on Soviet responses to whatever protests the US makes.

- We doubt that the leadership has made a determination either to settle for strategic parity with the US or to strike out for superiority. The former would require abandonment of aspirations too firmly lodged in the Soviet system and pressed by Soviet military institutions to be entirely suppressed; the latter would require more optimism about a declining US vitality and more faith in Soviet prowess than the leaders could confidently hold.
- We believe the Soviet leadership is currently pursuing a strategic policy it regards as simultaneously prudent and opportunistic, aimed at assuring no less than the continued maintenance of comprehensive equality with the US while at the same time seeking the attainment of some degree of strategic advantage if US behavior permits. The Soviets probably believe that unilateral restraints imposed on the US by its internal problems and skillful Soviet diplomacy offer some prospect that a military advantage can be acquired. To this end, they can be expected to exploit opportunities permitted them under the terms of SALT. At the same time, since they cannot be fully confident of such an outcome even as they probe its possibilities, they are probably also disposed to explore in SALT the terms on which stabilization of the strategic competition could be achieved.
- It is quite likely that the Soviet leaders see no basic contradiction between their detente and arms policies. Indeed they have publicly said as much on numerous occasions. Even if they do recognize a potential for conflict, they are probably uncertain about how far the US is prepared to insist on linking the two, and hence are probably inclined to test what the traffic will bear.
- This view of the Soviets' stance implies that they cannot be persuaded to moderate their current weapons programs except on two conditions: (1) they are persuaded that the unrestrained progress of those programs will provoke US reactions that jeopardize both their opportunistic and their minimum or prudential objectives; and (2) at the same time, they can conclude that, if their programs are restrained, reciprocal restraints will be placed on US strategic programs sufficient to assure attainment of Soviet prudential objectives.

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— The question is whether they will come to the view that they cannot have both substantially improving strategic capabilities and continuing benefits of detente—simultaneously and indefinitely. The US is unlikely to obtain answers without further direct exploration and negotiation. The US will not get the Soviets to respond to specific concerns on SALT compliance without frankly stating them. And we have estimated above that they are not likely to curb new programs unless they are persuaded both that US reactions to such programs would jeopardize their minimum objectives and that Soviet restraint would be reciprocated. But precisely what price, in terms of strategic limitations, the Soviets will prove willing to pay for detente remains to be tested.¹

¹ The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes this Estimate stops short of answering the original question, "What are the Soviets up to?" The available evidence suggests a strong Soviet commitment to achieving both numerical and qualitative strategic superiority over the US. They probably view detente as a tactic to that end. Whatever its other advantages, the Soviets need detente to bring about a slowdown in US technology. They need to gain access to US guidance and computer technology, to buy time to redress their current technology imbalance and to exploit what they consider to be a favorable opportunity to attain a technological lead during the next 10 to 15 years. The Soviets are no doubt aware of the impact detente is already having on NATO and US defense outlays and in gaining easier access to US technology. Accordingly they must view detente as a principal means of forestalling US advances in defense technology while enhancing their own relative power position.

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THE ESTIMATE

THE WEAPONS PROGRAMS

The Programs of Concern in Brief

1. The Soviet Union is engaged in a broad effort to augment and modernize its strategic forces. Among other things, it has commenced deployment of a new SLBM, the SS-N-8, and is developing a modification of the SS-N-6 carrying multiple reentry vehicles. It is continuing R&D activity on ABM interceptors and radars. The source of principal concern to the US at present, however, is the Soviet ICBM development effort.²

2. Since March 1972, the Soviets have commenced flight testing on four new ICBM designs of varying class and characteristics, and even more advanced systems may be in early stages of development. The effort easily matches and may prove to exceed that

² Soviet strategic forces will be discussed in considerably greater detail in the forthcoming NIE 11-8-73, "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Attack," scheduled for completion in October. They are considered here to the extent necessary for purposes of analyzing Soviet strategic policy and detente.

displayed in the mid-1960s when the SS-9, SS-X-10 (later cancelled), SS-11, and SS-13 ICBMs were under development. Although the four new ICBM designs, the SS-X-16, SS-X-17, SS-X-18, and the SS-X-19 [] have evolutionary ties to previous Soviet designs, they represent a very extensive modernization effort. They are evidently intended for a generation of new or highly modified silos; one may be intended for mobile deployment. All demonstrate efforts to improve guidance techniques. The SS-X-17, SS-X-18, and SS-X-19 have demonstrated a MIRV capability. The SS-X-16 has displayed post-boost vehicle (PBV) activity that makes its association with MIRV probable. All four new Soviet ICBM designs can be traced back at least to the 1966-1968 period, prior to the commencement of SALT. About the same time, or shortly after, work on currently emerging MIRV bus/PBV designs probably began.

3. Soviet interest in developing MIRVs and many other aspects of the new development programs were clearly portended at the time of the SAL accords and were generally antici-

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pated in our earlier estimates. Moreover, the Soviets have repeatedly made clear in SALT that they intended to proceed with modernization of their forces as permitted under the SAL accords. However, the overall scope of the activities we observe, and notably the number of individual programs under way at the same time, suggest a remarkably ambitious and concurrent effort.

4. In addition to such activities, other Soviet activities have been observed which at a minimum raise disturbing questions about Soviet willingness to cooperate in meeting US verification requirements under SALT. The most serious of these is construction of a silo adjacent to the launch control facilities at each of eight existing SS-11 groups—all of them started since the signing of the SALT agreements in May 1972. There are a number of reasons for believing that these structures are intended to house improved and harder ICBM launch control facilities. But unless features are observed which would preclude installing a missile in them, national technical means of verification will not be able conclusively to rule out their possible use as ICBM launchers.

5. Another question arises at the Plesetsk test range where the Soviets are flight testing the solid-propellant SS-X-16. Tenting cover associated with this program []

[] This missile appears to be under development for deployment both in silos and as a mobile ICBM, perhaps using partially deactivated ICBM launch facilities for logistic and handling support.

6. The new construction at Derazhnya and Pervomaysk, and the Plesetsk developments, although they certainly originated in normal Soviet planning, imply *de facto* tests of US resolve on the rules of SALT compliance.

Whether these tests are intentional and how determined they prove to be must await evidence on Soviet responses to whatever protests the US makes.³

7. The scope of the Soviet ICBM development programs raises questions about what kind of deployment they portend, how far they will go, and what impact they will ultimately have on the US-Soviet strategic relationship. If a launch capability for the new silo-like structures cannot be conclusively ruled out, and the Soviets continue to emplace them, the viability of the 1972 Interim Agreement might come into question. If the Soviets deploy the SS-X-16 as a mobile missile, the strong US unilateral declaration of May 1972 that such a step would violate the intent of the Interim Agreement could come into play. Should mobile ICBMs employ deactivated ICBM launch and support facilities, the intent of the Protocol to the Interim Agreement as seen by the US would clearly be violated. Continued use of tenting at Plesetsk, if challenged by the US, would suggest an insufficiently accommodating Soviet attitude toward SALT compliance and verification.

Possible Motivations and Forces Behind the ICBM Programs

8. The primary motivation driving Soviet strategic programs has been a desire to achieve a force of sufficient overall size and impressiveness to underwrite Soviet *international political objectives*. Soviet policymakers repeatedly assert the view that their military posture is a crucial element of Soviet status as a great power and vital to shaping a favorable “correlation of forces” in the world.

³The question of SALT ambiguities is discussed in more detail in the Annex.

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9. Within this broad context, certain operational characteristics are derived from Soviet *military doctrine*. Since the early 1960s, the Soviet military has articulated a view of strategic requirements that links deterrence with the ability actually to wage strategic war to the point of some form of victory. In addition to surviving attack and retaliating against urban-industrial targets, strategic forces, according to Soviet military writings, must be able to attack the enemy's strategic weapons, including hardened targets. The survivability requirement serves as a rationale for a large ICBM force of increased hardness as well as mobile ICBMs. The military requirement for hard-target counterforce capability has provided a rationale for the pursuit of higher throw-weight, MIRV, and increased accuracy for all or part of the modernized ICBM force. A MIRV capability, to which payload and guidance improvements contributed, was also dictated by the need to penetrate possible US ABM defenses of military or urban targets.

10. Another motivation for the new designs is found in the *imperatives of technology*. Technical advances, making the most of the developing state of the art, would lead to new guidance techniques, increased throw-weights, and MIRVs. The natural desire of missile designers to improve their product would have been supported by military and political decisionmakers, who felt impelled to do as much as possible to improve Soviet capabilities.

11. These early decisions on the follow-on programs were probably influenced by very important *institutional interests* in the Soviet defense establishment. The Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces, the premier service, certainly had an interest in moving beyond existing systems. The three major missile design entities presumably pressed the opportunity to engage themselves in follow-on programs. Apparently the Soviet pattern of partly competitive designs

from different design entities was repeated in the new programs.

12. Soviet determination to carry these programs forward was probably also reinforced by Soviet *perceptions of US weapons activity*. In the near term, they could observe MIRVing and accuracy improvement for Minuteman and Poseidon and arming of US bombers with SRAM; in the more distant future, the prospect of Trident and the B-1. Soviet publications generally depict US strategic programs as dynamic, purposeful, and threatening. The Soviets certainly also recognize the political hurdles these programs must surmount in Congress, and use various means of encouraging opposition to them. The Soviets have, however, seen US programs proceed despite vigorous opposition in Congress, and they would therefore consider it imprudent to assume that major US force improvement plans will not, in the end, be acted upon. Thus, the Soviet military probably has had as a part of its case for current programs that they are a prudent investment against US force improvements.

13. Finally, although the new ICBM development programs were well under way by the time SALT began in 1969, and ABM proved to be the main concern of the USSR during SALT ONE, the Soviets probably now see some utility in their new ICBM programs as possible *sources of leverage* on the US.

14. Top-level Soviet decisions on proceeding into a vigorous R&D test program preceded the culmination of SALT ONE and the May 1972 Summit. []

[] new ICBM flight tests commenced in March 1972. If the Moscow Summit and its SALT agreements influenced or deflected the impending test programs, this is not discernible. Brezhnev firmly asserted the Soviet intent to press vigorously on R&D and permissible force modernization. There is

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evidence that the top leaders were very concerned to obtain assurances that one of the future ICBMs could be deployed within the constraint of a 10-15 percent increase in the size of silos for small ICBMs.

Where Do the Soviets Go From Here?

15. The Soviets certainly appear determined to press their current ICBM test programs forward to the point where they could deploy any or all models with MIRVs. It is difficult to project with confidence the kind of deployed force that will emerge from these programs, although possible force variants can be conjectured. What is clear is that the Soviets intend the present development effort to yield a major modernization of their deployed forces. There is evidence that the Soviets are now planning to produce more of some types of new missiles than required purely for R&D testing. []

16. The Soviets have in SALT often spoken of mutuality of deterrence, but they have not accepted a concept of parity in numbers of intercontinental delivery vehicles. They refer to a more general idea of "equal security" with the US as an objective. But Moscow has not regarded "equal security" as dictating equality in numbers. On the contrary, "equal security" has been the basis of Soviet demands for larger numbers of Soviet intercontinental delivery vehicles, for example, as compensation for forward based systems. Qualitatively, they no doubt consider that it requires the attainment of technological equality with the US, which, in the most immediate terms, means the freedom to develop and deploy

MIRVs. More broadly, they speak of the need to insure against unexpected technological breakthroughs by the US.

17. In addition, they have been factoring requirements for peripheral attack, particularly against China, into operational deployments of central strategic forces, notably by deploying some SS-11s so as to include full coverage of China. They have suggested at SALT that peripheral attack requirements should be gauged in estimating overall Soviet force requirements, but they have not indicated how these requirements are to be reconciled with an equitable US-Soviet balance.

18. The experience of SALT ONE probably heightened the Soviet appreciation of the leverage their programs could have on negotiations. The Soviets had dynamic programs for the deployment of new launchers at the time, while the US did not. Soviet leaders may well perceive the qualitative momentum of present efforts as imposing negotiating pressure on the US similar to that generated by their continuing ICBM and SLBM deployments during most of SALT ONE.

19. Since the US Government also intends to press force modernization programs allowed under SALT, the need to hedge against US force improvements probably continues to be a strong motivation behind current Soviet weapons development. Soviet leaders no doubt believe that the Soviet effort to match the US qualitatively is shooting at a moving target and that laxity on the Soviet part may concede future advantages to the US.

20. Finally, Soviet political and military leaders, or at least some of them, probably believe that a combination of vigorous weapons development, a skillful detente diplomacy, and a good measure of luck in the form of

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US laxity, could at some point deliver them a meaningful strategic advantage. They would see greater strength as improving their foreign policy positions and at least marginally improving war outcomes for them if deterrence failed. Beyond this, how they might gauge such an advantage in operational terms is not obvious since the kind of superiority that the US once had over the USSR would hardly appear feasible to them in the foreseeable future. But they could persuade themselves of the value of a credible threat to Minuteman even if other components of the US Triad remain highly survivable.

21. As noted earlier, Soviet military writings of the last 10 years reflect a clear concern for war-fighting capabilities, including counterforce capabilities. Some of these writings have rejected the notion that the destructiveness of nuclear weapons renders strategic war "unwinnable" and thereby posit, in principle, that strategic superiority is essential. While the broad outlines of military doctrine are subject to top-level political approval, it is not clear to what extent individual Politburo members accept all the precepts of that doctrine, particularly as it bears on the "winnability" of nuclear war. The Soviet positions at SALT suggest that, with regard to retaliation, the Soviet leadership accept the view that both the US and USSR possess more than enough nuclear weapons to bring about a world-wide catastrophe, that the side attacked first would retain a retaliatory force that would make a war between the US and the USSR disastrous for both. However, while the political leaders refer with apparent sincerity to the futility of nuclear war, they accept the idea of maximizing the effectiveness of the force they would use if deterrence fails. Accordingly, there has been a substantial Soviet investment in developments and

deployments that can best be explained as an effort to enhance their strategic capabilities, including counterforce missions.

22. The Soviet regime faces new conditions bearing on strategic choices. The missile build-up of the 1960s has attained for the USSR recognized status as an equal of the US in the strategic arms field. China has come to be a major and permanent strategic military problem for Soviet planners. The current stage of the SALT process requires a closer dialogue between Soviet military and political leaders on military and political goals. SALT tends to give the "action-reaction" phenomenon in the arms competition more substance than it had in the past by placing the arms decisions of both sides in a negotiating context. The ABM Treaty requires a reappraisal of Soviet strategic doctrine in which extensive active defense was seen as a necessary part of a viable war-fighting posture.

23. In deciding on and implementing strategic force policy, Soviet leaders face a multitude of specific choices. Diverse pressures bear upon them, particularly pressures from military claimants and weapons producers. But it is difficult to imagine these choices being made without a general rationale concerning the kind of strategic relationship with the US they desire. The range of policy directions open to the Soviets could be stated as: (a) acceptance of strategic parity with the US on the basis of explicit SALT undertakings and some element of self-restraint, with the result that the strategic weapons competition substantially subsides; or (b) a quest for strategic superiority, in which they try to use SALT to restrain US programs while Soviet weapons programs drive inexorably forward.

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24. The trouble with posing Soviet policy choice as one between parity and superiority, however, is that it dichotomizes too starkly what is for the Soviet leadership a much more complex and conditional predicament. Positing strategic superiority as both a desire and an expectation requires the Soviets to be overly optimistic about the decline of the US's military vitality and about their own technological prowess. Although the vigor and extent of Soviet weapons efforts conjure up the image of a single-minded quest for superiority, we do not believe they should as yet be construed to mean that. Present Soviet efforts to develop improved ICBMs can so far be held consistent with the goal of narrowing the technological gap between US and Soviet capabilities. Soviet diplomacy and SALT policy avow, indeed, an aim no more ambitious than "equal security."

25. On the other hand, positing parity as a Soviet strategic goal requires discounting power aspirations that are firmly lodged in the Soviet system as a whole and pressed by its various military institutions. The burden of historical and ideological tradition makes it very difficult for some Soviet political and military leaders to accept the notion that an area of competition so vital to their security as the strategic military competition with the US can be set aside by agreement. This is especially so insofar as the terms of agreement, dictated by current nuclear realities, require explicit and indefinite acceptance of a condition of military vulnerability for their society. Several clandestine reports allege that Soviet political and military leaders see SALT and detente as devices for buying time—one mentions a 10-15 year breathing space—during which the Soviets and their allies can build political, economic, and military power for future tests of strength. In context, these

views probably reflect an admixture of genuine belief and policy justification, but some Soviets are no doubt disposed to accept the idea of a long-term breathing spell as a rationale for detente. Those who are may see some prospect for the USSR's acquiring strategic advantage over the time period covering the life-cycle of newly appearing weapons systems.

26. We doubt that the Soviet leadership has firmly settled on either of the courses described above. Rather, we believe it is currently pursuing a strategic policy it regards as simultaneously prudent and opportunistic, aimed at assuring no less than the continued maintenance of comprehensive equality with the US while at the same time seeking the attainment of some degree of strategic advantage if US behavior permits. The Soviets probably believe that unilateral restraints imposed on the US by its internal problems and skillful Soviet diplomacy offer some prospect that a military advantage can be acquired—an advantage which could have political usefulness for the Soviets in normal diplomacy and possible crises. To this end, they can be expected to exploit opportunities permitted them under the terms of SALT. At the same time, since they cannot be fully confident of such an outcome even as they probe its possibilities, they are probably also disposed to explore in SALT the terms on which stabilization of the strategic competition could be achieved.

27. The logic of this prudential-opportunistic mix fits well with Soviet external conditions, i.e., uncertainty about the vigor of US military competitiveness, and also with the institutional and doctrinal forces pressing from within. It appears fully consistent with Soviet foreign policy behavior and with their

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comportment at SALT. It implies that the Soviets cannot be persuaded to moderate their current weapons programs except on two conditions:

(a) They are persuaded that the unrestrained progress of those programs will provoke US reactions that jeopardize both their opportunistic and their minimum or prudential objectives;

(b) At the same time, they can conclude that, if their programs are restrained, reciprocal restraints will be placed on US strategic programs sufficient to assure attainment of Soviet prudential objectives.

SOVIET DETENTE POLICY AND STRATEGIC POWER

28. It is quite likely that the Soviet leaders see no basic contradiction between their detente and arms policies. Indeed they have publicly said as much on numerous occasions. Even if they do recognize a potential for conflict, they are probably uncertain about how far the US is prepared to insist on linking the two, and hence are probably inclined to test what the traffic will bear.

29. The question can then be raised of what price the Soviets would be willing to pay in the coin of strategic activities and power aspirations to keep up the considerable momentum of political detente, if the issue confronted them in these terms. There can be little doubt that the Soviet leadership has a considerable interest and investment in that momentum. Brezhnev can and probably has argued persuasively to his colleagues that there is at present no truly viable alternative to his detente policy on the political level.

30. The continuity of that policy is most pronounced in its European dimension, where

the mid-1960s found the Soviets groping for a more activist diplomacy that would serve the multiple goals of consolidating Soviet hegemony in East Europe; responding to the new assertiveness of West European states while attenuating their incentives to achieve political, economic, and military unity; and fostering the decline of US presence and influence in Western Europe.

31. Documentary evidence as well as the historical sequence of events indicates that the flare up of Sino-Soviet hostilities in 1969 plus the subsequent Peking-Washington moves toward rapprochement added an urgent new dimension to Soviet imperatives toward detente. In the face of these events, the Soviets drew the natural conclusion that their adopted course of striving for a long-term military and political containment of China could not work successfully if Peking's relations with the West and with Japan were markedly better than Moscow's.

32. Finally, of course, there is the substantial economic interest that the Soviets have in the momentum of detente. They certainly hope and some Soviet leaders surely expect that political detente will bring economic rewards in terms of access to advanced Western technology and capital investment for the exploitation of energy and raw material resources and the modernization of Soviet industry.

33. For a variety of reasons, bearing essentially on the willingness and ability of the West to provide such benefits and on the ability of the Soviet economic system to absorb and exploit them effectively, there may be a considerable gap between the results achieved and Soviet expectations about them. But this is not to deny the political strength of the latter in current Soviet calculations.

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34. The economic burden of defense does not compel the Soviets to seek force limiting agreements, even though the defense sector consumes a large share of some high-value resources. In fact, the Soviets can probably sustain a steady, gradual increase in military spending. Nevertheless, the economic and political benefits of detente at the very least offer a fairly relaxed environment in which conflicting military and civilian priorities can be reconciled and minimize the prospect that military spending will have to be sharply increased.

35. In sum, the Soviet interest and investment in political detente is considerable. And the personal investment of key leaders, notably Brezhnev, is great. He and the regime generally would be severely discomfitted by the collapse of detente. The Soviet regime sees detente with the US and its allies as a fundamentally competitive relationship. Moreover, as Soviet treatment of domestic dissidents and East-West human contacts makes clear, the Soviet conception of detente excludes the

close social and cultural relations that the West regards as a normal part of international life. Nevertheless, the Soviet leadership proclaims and evidently believes that political detente can be a useful and long-term proposition. But the question is whether they will come to the view that they cannot have both substantially improving strategic capabilities and continuing benefits of detente—simultaneously and indefinitely.

36. The US is unlikely to obtain answers without further direct exploration and negotiation. The US will not get the Soviets to respond to specific concerns on SALT compliance without frankly stating them. And we have estimated above that they are not likely to curb new programs unless they are persuaded both that US reactions to such programs would jeopardize their minimum objectives and that Soviet restraint would be reciprocated. But precisely what price, in terms of strategic limitations, the Soviets will prove willing to pay for detente remains to be tested.

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POSTSCRIPT: BROADER OBSERVATIONS ON SOVIET POLICY

The foregoing Estimate has assessed the relationship between Soviet strategic arms programs and detente. Overall Soviet policy is, of course, a complex matter with many dimensions—internal and external—of which detente diplomacy and strategic arms policy are only two. NIE 11-72, "Soviet Foreign Policies and the Outlook for Soviet-American Relations," dated 20 April 1972, discussed Soviet policy in broader context. The following excerpts from that Estimate are relevant to the central questions of the present paper and offer useful perspective on them.

The USSR's International Position: Purposes and Perceptions

1. The underlying premises of Soviet foreign policy remain intact despite the changes which have affected Soviet society in the postwar period and despite the dramatic developments in the world situation during these years. The Soviet leaders continue to conceive of themselves as being in the service of Marxist-Leninist ideology and its promise of eventual success for communism. And, while this body of doctrine does not prescribe particular actions in specific situations, it creates a set of mind which sometimes distorts the perception of the Soviet policymakers, tends to set limits on how far and how fast they can go in modifying established positions, and represents a constant factor in internal party politics. These preconceptions argue that a fundamental reconciliation of interests between the USSR and the US is impossible and that an eventual convergence of political, economic and social systems is out of the question. Conflict in some form is seen as a permanent feature of the relationship, and Moscow assumes that the governing motive on each side is to gain ascendancy over the other. This means that the USSR is committed to efforts to magnify its relative power in a variety of ways. Yet, since the Soviet leaders consider the outcome of the enduring struggle to be foreordained in favor of communism, they can also find justification in their ideology for a policy of gradualism and low risk.

2. While the USSR's international behavior in practice owes more to pragmatic considerations of national interest than to revolutionary goals, for the Soviet leaders to acknowledge that this is so would be to raise questions about the legitimacy of their own rule and to lend credibility to Chinese charges of betrayal. This helps to explain why the Russians continue to chase the illusion of international Communist unity and to struggle against the tide of grow-

ing Communist diversity even while they incline increasingly to the use of instruments other than Communist Parties in their efforts to gain wider influence abroad.

Internal Dissent

24. The appearance and, even more, the persistence in recent years of an active political protest which has found some of its most effective advocates within the USSR's privileged scientific-technical community has attracted considerable attention in the West. Closely related to this is the growth in national consciousness and assertiveness among non-Great Russian minorities—Soviet Jews, Ukrainians, the Baltic nationalities and the Moslem-Turkic peoples of Central Asia. The regime has itself shown some sensitivity to the impact of these developments on its international image. But whatever their potential as future problems, these manifestations of internal tension and alienation for now have little relevance for Soviet foreign policy; what relevance they do have stems largely from their impact abroad. At home, to the extent that Soviet decisionmakers concern themselves with opinion outside their own small circle, what counts more is the mood of the Soviet masses, with whom the intellectual dissidents have few connections. In general, this broad popular opinion reinforces the regime in its conduct of foreign policy, for there can be little doubt that the ordinary Soviet citizen—Russian and non-Russian alike—takes considerable pride in the USSR's world position.

Detente in Europe

42. Not coincidentally, the only policies to which the name of the principal Soviet leader has been attached, the "Brezhnev Peace Policy" and the "Brezhnev Doctrine" of limited sovereignty apply mainly to Europe. The policies embraced by these terms are, in fact,

closely related, in that detente in Europe is viewed by Moscow as part of the process of strengthening its position in both Eastern Europe and Western Europe. The Chinese problem, though probably not at this stage a crucial factor, is, nevertheless, also an important strand in Soviet European policy. And, where it concerns the security of the Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe and the future of the two Germanies, this policy is apparently a sensitive issue of internal party politics and thus may be an area of policy more susceptible to tactical variation than others.

49. *Objectives in Western Europe.* Beyond these security concerns in Eastern Europe, the USSR's own economic weaknesses and growing preoccupation with the Chinese front have turned it away from the politics of crisis and confrontation in Europe. At the same time, the changing pattern of US-West European relationships and trends within Western Europe itself favoring a winding-down of the prolonged East-West confrontation have evidently convinced Moscow that longstanding aims have become more realizable than ever before. It sees in these circumstances opportunities to weaken NATO, to secure the permanent division of Germany, to reduce the presence and influence of the US, and to advance its longer-term aim of establishing the USSR as the predominant political and military power on the continent. These motives have, during the last several years, gained added force from two significant developments, one positive from the Soviet point of view, the other negative: the recasting and reinvigoration of West Germany's Ostpolitik, and developments within the EEC.

The Future Setting of Soviet-American Relations

74. The preceding paragraphs have suggested a number of ways in which the broad setting of US-Soviet relations has been altered in recent years. The Soviets evidently believe that as a consequence of these changes their international position relative to that of the US has been strengthened, though in a situation of considerable flux. The continuing overriding necessity of avoiding nuclear war with the US will for some time to come remain an important constraint on Soviet behavior, and the uncertainties stemming from the shifting pattern of international alignments may act as an inhibition on them. At the same time, because of the USSR's urge to enlarge its world role, its relationship with the US will retain a sharp competitive edge.

75. The USSR has compelling reasons for wanting to keep its relations with the US in reasonably good repair. A certain level of amity is essential in the first place to the maintenance of communications on issues affecting the bilateral strategic relationship. It is also useful to Moscow to have open channels for the discussion of such issues of common concern to the superpowers as nuclear non-proliferation and for crisis management in those cases where conflicts between other parties contain the threat of escalation to general war. A worsening of relations, conversely, could create complications for Moscow in the conduct of its policies in Europe and toward China. Rising tension with the US would also have undesirable internal consequences for the Soviet leaders to the extent that it generated military requirements which would add to economic strains. It may be that in the present phase the Soviet leaders regard normal and continuing contact, perhaps including occasional meetings at the highest level, as essential to a careful management of the multifaceted Soviet-American relationship.

76. But continued political rivalry involving some amount of tension is implicit in the philosophical divergence between the US and the USSR over the ordering of international relations and the USSR's refusal to underwrite stability, except in Eastern Europe and the USSR itself. It is also owing to the fact that the larger world role to which the USSR aspires is unrealizable except at the expense of the US. Tension with the US, at the same time, has traditionally been used by the regime to mobilize and control the Soviet population and to sanction its monopoly of power.

77. Whether, within these broad limits, the USSR will in particular circumstances lean toward sharper competition or broader cooperation with the US will naturally depend on the interaction of many variables. Crucial among these will be Moscow's appraisal of US intentions, and, in particular, the extent to which it will be able to overcome the suspicion that the US aims at using conciliation as an instrument of political and ideological subversion within the Soviet sphere. Given their present reading of comparative strengths, there may, on the other hand, be instances in which the Soviets will take US conciliatoriness as a sign of weakness.

Longer-Term Prospects

81. These observations are not meant to suggest that we see the US facing a Soviet Union which will be permanently intransigent and unfulfilled in its international ambitions. To say that the Soviet policy is at present in a forward phase is not to say that it will remain so. There is much that is tentative and experimental about this policy and it can be questioned how long it can be sustained before Moscow would be in danger of over-extension. As noted earlier, developments in Germany or Eastern Europe could cause Moscow's detente policy in Europe to founder. Conversely, because of its economic needs and the pressures generated by the Chinese problem, the USSR may come to regard detente in Europe as indispensable and worth the concessions required to maintain it. The Soviets might, in the same way, come to see the need for more flexible forms of political, economic, and military cooperation in Eastern Europe and for a lowering of the barriers to communication between the states of Eastern and Western Europe.

82. The USSR's efforts to extend its presence and influence in the Third World will come up against nationalist resistance and will inevitably encounter a certain number of setbacks. Limitations on Soviet resources will also have a bearing on Soviet activity in the Third World, especially if, as seems possible, expenditures there in coming years yield diminishing political returns. Certain other developments of an essentially unpredictable kind—a severe worsening of the Sino-Soviet conflict, or a convulsion in the Soviet leadership—could have an even more significant impact on the direction of Soviet foreign policy. But

whether goals are altered or not, it cannot suit the USSR, because of the complexity of its interests, to have an uncontrolled international environment. Chances are that with time and wider involvement, the USSR will discover more frequently than hitherto a common interest with the US in containing some of the causes of international tension and in seeking the bases for limited accommodations.

83. Whether the future will bring a more meaningful modification of the Soviet international outlook and behavior seems likely in the end to depend on the USSR's internal evolution. And here the most crucial question may be how the Soviet leaders deal with the problems of adaptive change in their society—particularly with the problem of economic modernization: by minimal measures or by serious reform. The entrenched and self-perpetuating bureaucratic oligarchy now in charge is resistant to change. Among the men in the Politburo who now seem most likely to take over from the aging Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgorny, there may be some who will eventually reveal reformist inclinations. But such tendencies, if they exist, are not now in evidence. The present Politburo is, by and large, an Old Guard presiding over the preservation of a system which must seem to its members to have served the Soviet Union's and their own personal interests well. They are disposed to change it as little as possible and they will attempt to stimulate economic growth and technological progress by resorting to traditional methods of discipline and persuasion supplemented by modest modifications of the economic structure and such technical assistance from abroad as they can obtain.

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ANNEX

SALT AMBIGUITIES: THE NEW SILOS AT DERAZHNYA AND
PERVOMAYSK AND DEVELOPMENTS AT PLESETSK

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SALT AMBIGUITIES: THE NEW SILOS AT DERAZHNYA AND PERVOMAYSK AND DEVELOPMENTS AT PLESETSK

1. The new silo construction at Derazhnya and Pervomaysk and continued disturbing activity involving the SS-X-16 program at Plesetsk are related to the larger question of how the Soviets see the terms of their strategic relations with the US.

2. The eight new holes observed at Derazhnya and Pervomaysk since April 1973, [] are believed to be for launch control. If so, it is likely that they will turn out to be copies of III-X silo facilities already present at those deployment complexes and at the SS-9 complex at Dombarovsky. []

[] Unfortunately, the III-X silo cannot be conclusively proved not to be an ICBM silo. (Even if such structures are in fact used as launch control centers, we cannot as yet

rule out the possibility that the silo might later be used to house a missile.)

3. The more immediate question, however, is how the Soviets expect the US to abide this emerging uncertainty in view of its inherent and precedent-setting potential. There is no reason to suspect that the Soviets initiated this program with the intent to face the US with the ambiguities appearing today. They should, however, have had some clue from US statements since May 1972 that the US counted the six III-X silos at Derazhnya and Pervomaysk and the five III-X silos we believe to be under construction at SS-9 complexes as ICBM silos since they were included in the total figure of Soviet ICBMs that the US employed, 1,618. They could have raised and begun to clarify the problem then, although such a step would have required relaxation of very stringent Soviet inhibitions against volunteering information about their own military programs.

4. There is some evidence that in May 1972 the Soviets believed the US would count only 60 new-type silo launchers as being under construction at Derazhnya and Pervomaysk, rather than 66 obtained by adding the III-X silos there. Hence, they would perceive no impropriety in proceeding with further construction of these facilities. Con-

tinuation of such activity in the face of possible US protests, however, would constitute a clear test of US resolve in pressing for rigorous modalities of SALT compliance.

5. SS-X-16 activity at Plesetsk poses a clearer challenge to expressed US interests than the III-X development. The unilateral US declaration against mobile missile deployment is not contravened by Soviet development and testing of such a missile, and the Soviets refused to agree to prohibition on deployment.

Thus, a potential conflict of intent is readily apparent.

6. Soviet employment of tent cover for probable SS-X-16 related activity at Plesetsk antedates the signing of the SALT ONE agreements

Whatever the intent, continued employment of such practices would appear to the Soviets not

to violate SALT prohibitions. The Soviets no doubt take the view that tenting, as an existing practice, is not forbidden under the article of the Interim Agreement on verification, and that a mobile system does not fall under the Agreement in any case. But it is hard to imagine them unaware that US anxieties would be aroused by these practices.

7. Evidence that mobile SS-X-16s may be using SS-7 soft sites and facilities at Plesetsk for support and handling presents the possibility that deactivated soft ICBM launchers will be traded in for an equal number of SLBMs and replaced by an even larger number of mobile ICBMs. None of this would violate the letter of the Interim Agreement, but it would clearly conflict with the US objective that deactivated sites would have no further strategic utility.

They may have in mind some non-strategic use for these areas, but if they are prepared to risk US displeasure, they would presumably see no restriction in the terms of the agreement on the use of these sites for mobile missiles.

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